

## University of Groningen

### Aging in multilingual Netherlands

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## Stellingen

1. Studies on multilingualism and aging should focus on larger and more varied samples, in which the contribution of language to healthy aging is explained on the basis of, rather than masked by, individual factors.
2. It is by virtue of the linguistic context (the use of language and opportunities to practise) rather than the knowledge of multiple languages in individuals that multilingualism may offer some contribution to enhanced cognitive performance.
3. Monolingual individuals use -- within a language -- different linguistic repertoires, just as 'multilinguals' do. Therefore, we should employ a usage-continuum of multilingualism; categorising 'groups' of bilingual and monolingual speakers is meaningless.
4. The Netherlands is a multilingual society, yet maintains a single language (native-like) norm. For older individuals with limited L2 proficiency, this norm induces anxiety and can be a hurdle to communicate and gain access to healthcare facilities.
5. "When an old man dies, a library burns to the ground". This African proverb is not often honoured in western societies, where aging is regarded as a process of decline rather than an enriching experience. The effects and opportunities of multilingualism put forward in this dissertation dictate the need for a richer view on aging.
6. Although a firm embedding in a social L1 network can circumvent a language barrier for older adults with a limited proficiency in the target language, this strategy perpetuates old-age dependence.
7. "I knew who I was this morning, but I've changed a few times since then" – Lewis Carroll
8. Het echte voordeel van meertaligheid is mensen stiekem te kunnen verstaan, en onverstaanbaar te zijn wanneer het uitkomt.